

# Pak faces flak for Almeida curbs

## Army Washes Its Hands Of Controversy

Omer Farooq Khan | TNN

Islamabad: As pressure is mounted on the Nawaz Sharif government over the overseas travel restrictions placed on Dawn newspaper reporter Cyril Almeida, Geo News channel quoted unnamed military officials as saying that they had nothing against Dawn or Almeida and had no role in putting his name on the "exit control list".

"We only demanded that the government determine the person who leaked the news of a high-level meeting on national security in a distorted form to the newspa-

## Focus shifts to ending illegal trade across border

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The Border Security Force and industry body Ficci will discuss steps on Thursday to stop illegal cross-border trade with Pakistan as demands pour in to sever all trade ties with the neighbouring country in the wake of the Uri attack. Goods and profits from cross-border smuggling are often used to support terrorist activity in India.

Officials said a one-day seminar on border management and illicit cross-border trade, the first of its kind, would see Ficci experts and officers from the BSF and other agencies — such as customs and the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence — interact to find ways to stop the illegal traffic of goods from Pakistan so that the money generated from it is not used to fund terrorism. The experts will also discuss how to systematically identify and apprehend habitual offenders.

Experts from US Homeland Security Investigations will also be present at the event to talk about the international perspective of illegal cross-border trade.

A large number of consumer goods and banned items, including textiles, dry fruits, spices, carpets, drugs and fake currency, come to India from Pakistan via border routes, and from India smugglers take jewellery, textiles, machinery and electronic appliances to Pakistan.

"With the Indian government announcing it would seal the Indo-Pak border completely by 2018, issues related to smuggling of drugs, consumer goods, and even arms from Pakistan to India will be the centre of discussions on Thursday. How those traders who work legally should not bear the brunt of the efforts of the security agencies, and how those misusing loopholes in the system should be taken to task, would be discussed," a senior officer said on condition of anonymity.

## Another newspaper questions Sharif govt, army: Why not act against Hafiz, Azhar?

Islamabad: A leading Pakistani daily asked the civilian and military establishment on Wednesday why action against Jaish-e-Muhammed chief Masood Azhar and Jamaat-ud-Dawa's Hafiz Saeed was a "danger" to the country's national security.



Hafiz Saeed

A strong editorial in 'Nation', considered close to the government and the military establishment, titled 'How to lose friends and alienate people' said the government and the military were lecturing

per," Geo quoted a high-level military official as saying.

Quoting unnamed officials present at a security-related meeting of top civilian and military leaders, chaired by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on October 3, Almeida

the press instead of taking action against Azhar and Saeed. Pathankot terror attack mastermind Azhar and the kingpin of the 2008 Mumbai attacks Saeed roam freely in Pakistan and are believed to have the protection of the military.

"The report by (Dawn's Cyril) Almeida has been called fabricated, and speculative reporting, but the government and military brass in yesterday's meeting delivered no explanation for why members of the national assembly are

had reported last Thursday that they witnessed a confrontation between Shahbaz Sharif, the PM's younger brother and Punjab CM, and Lt Gen Rizwan Akhtar, director general of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), over Pakistan's

protesting the visible presence of banned outfits in Pakistan," the editorial said.

"Or why possible action against Masood Azhar, or Hafiz Saeed is a danger to "national security"? Or why Pakistan faces increasing isolation? We're all ears."

"And for Mr Almeida, nothing but solidarity. More power to you, and to your pen. The press stands with you," the editorial added.

In another editorial, Dawn said it continues to stand by Almeida's story and has rejected allegations of "vested interest and false reporting".

growing international isolation because of the military leadership's behind-the-scenes support to certain banned terror groups.

On Wednesday, international human rights organisations and media watchdogs

demanding immediate withdrawal of all restrictions on Almeida. Amnesty International's director of global issues Audrey Gaughran said, "The travel ban on Cyril Almeida is a crude intimidation tactic designed to silence journalists and stop them from doing their jobs."

Reacting to Nawaz Sharif's statement warning of "stern action" for the publication of the report, Gaughran said, "The language used by the Prime Minister's office is chilling. It's one thing for authorities to dispute and contradict a media report. But it's quite another to threaten a journalist under the guise of national security."

Human Rights Commission of Pakistan too called upon the government to immediately remove Almeida's name from the ECL and refrain from harassing him and intimidating his employers.

Journalists' bodies in Pakistan reacted sharply to the curbs on Almeida and demanded that the action be reversed immediately.

# Yet again, Islamabad says there was no surgical hit

## Had It Taken Place, We'd Have Retaliated: Basit

TIMES NEWS NETWORK



**Pakistan high commissioner to India Abdul Basit claimed that the term surgical strike was being used very loosely in India and that there was only cross-border firing**

New Delhi: Dismissing as "fictional" New Delhi's statement that the Indian Army had executed successful "surgical strikes" against terror launch pads across the Line of Control on September 29, Pakistan high commissioner to India Abdul Basit claimed on Wednesday that Islamabad would have "immediately retaliated" if that indeed had been the case.

Basit said India's claim that it has conclusive video evidence of the surgical strikes seems "fabricated" as the sting operation conducted by an Indian television channel showed a police superintendent at Mirpur, Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, telephonically confirming the cross-border action by Indian Special Forces.

"No such surgical strikes took place. There was only cross-border firing by Indian troops (on September 29), in which two Pakistan army soldiers were murdered. Pakistan responded to it immediately and proportionately," Basit said in an interview to a television channel.

"Had there been any surgical strike, Pakistan would have retaliated immediately... we did not need any reaction time. It seems to me the

term surgical strike is being used very loosely in India... no Indian soldiers crossed the LoC... there was only cross-border firing," he said.

As reported by TOI earlier, the Indian government has not released evidence of the surgical strikes in the shape of video footage, photographs or infrared images because it does not want to push the Pakistan army into a corner, nor compromise operational details, tactics, techniques and equipment used in the cross-LoC raids.

Basit also brushed aside the article written by Pakistan's well-known defence expert Ayesha Siddiqi which said Indian troops had indeed crossed the LoC to kill five to six militants and injure three to four soldiers at least one place in Duhdhal, POK, on September 29. "I do not know what the basis of her statement is... She is a good friend of mine," he said.

The envoy reacted similarly to the much-talked-about article by journalist Cyril Al-

meida in the newspaper Dawn about the rift between the Nawaz Sharif government and the Pakistan army leadership over the latter's covert support to militants and the consequent diplomatic isolation of Pakistan. While Dawn has stood by its story, Basit said the Pakistan PMO had "rejected the story" firmly.

The Pakistani envoy said he "did not see desire" on the part of India to engage with Pakistan on "the core issue" of Kashmir. "By blaming Pakistan or calling it a terrorist state (after the terror attack on the Indian Army's Uri camp), you are closing all doors for cooperation," he said.

After the Uri attack, India had walked out of the Saarc summit in Islamabad, which had to be cancelled after Bangladesh, Bhutan and Afghanistan followed suit soon after. "It was a huge setback and loss for all countries... But we are confident that Pakistan will hold the Saarc summit next year; if not later this year," said the Pakistani envoy.

# Pariah Pak wants 'greater Saarc' to counter India

Washington: Pakistan is exploring the possibility of creating a greater South Asian economic alliance to counter India's controlling hold on the eight-member South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc), diplomatic observers said.

A parliamentary delegation from Pakistan, which is now in New York, pitched this idea during its five-day visit to Washington last week. Dawn online reported on Wednesday. "A greater South Asia is already emerging," said senator Mushahid Hussain Syed in one of his interactions with the media.

"This greater South Asia includes China, Iran and the neighbouring Central Asian republics." He described the China-Pakistan economic corridor as the key economic route linking South Asia with Central Asia. The Gwadar port, he said, would be the nearest warm water port, not only for China but also for the landlocked Central Asian states. "We want India to join this arrangement as well," said Hussain, an offer Indians are un-

## Pakistan senator Mushahid Hussain Syed has been quoted as saying that the greater South Asia alliance would include China, Iran and the neighbouring Central Asian republics

likely to accept as they are comfortable with the advantage that Saarc provides them. Last month, India used its influence in Saarc to isolate Pakistan when it announced that it would not attend the regional group's 19th summit, scheduled in Islamabad on November 15 and 16.

India cited Pakistan's involvement in the September 18 terrorist attack at an Army camp in Uri town of Kashmir, in which 19 soldiers died, as the reason for its decision to boycott the summit. Other Saarc nations — Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Sri Lanka — joined India to boycott the meeting.

"Apparently, the show-down forced Pakistan to conclude that in its present shape, Saarc will always be dominated by India. That's why they are now talking about a greater South Asia," said a senior diplomat, con-

firmed reports that Pakistan is actively seeking a new regional arrangement.

Diplomatic observers in Washington said the proposed arrangement also suits China as it is worried about India's rapidly growing influence in the region. They argued that China can play an important role in persuading Central Asian republics and Iran to join the new arrangement. But, according to the observers, Saarc members will have little interest in supporting the idea.

There is not much benefit for Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka in joining a land route far from their borders.

The member that is likely to get the most benefits from a greater South Asian alliance is Afghanistan. But observers believe that Afghanistan is too closely linked to India to join any arrangement that hurts New Delhi's interests. IANS

# Intel alert on infiltration by LeT terrorists

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Chandigarh: The Border Security Force (BSF) and Intelligence Bureau (IB) have issued a security alert about six Lashkar-e-Taiba militants attempting to cross the Punjab border for a fideyeen attack on defence establishments.

The alert comes days after the Punjab government revoked its evacuation order from the six border districts of Ferozepur, Pathankot, Gurdaspur, Amritsar, Taran Taran and Fazilka. "Input received has indicated that a group of six Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorists is camping near Pakistan's border out post (BOP) Sukha Chak," the alert said.

The alert is descriptive in nature and says the terrorists are trying to infiltrate either through the densely forested area of Ujh river near BSF BOP Manjhari or through Ravi river in Dinanagar sector. "The group may target Army or BSF establishments in Pathankot area," it adds.

The Punjab police said it was ready to thwart any attempt by the terrorists. "The riverine beds remain a concern," said a senior Punjab cop.

# We have to be careful and avoid collateral damage: GOC

▶ Continued from P1

This may have been owing to a change in the Army's approach, a perspective mentioned in passing by defence minister Manohar Parrikar in Mumbai on Monday. "Discretion," Parrikar said, "is the better part of valour." While he did not provide any specific instance, there have indeed been several instances when officers and jawans rushed in to engage terrorists, leading to casualties.

"We have to be careful to avoid collateral damage to the forces," said General Officer Commanding (GOC), Major Gen Ashok Narula, after the 60-hour encounter.

The Lashkar men had hidden themselves inside



The building where two militants had taken refuge during the gunbattle in Pamore. The 60-hour encounter ended on Wednesday

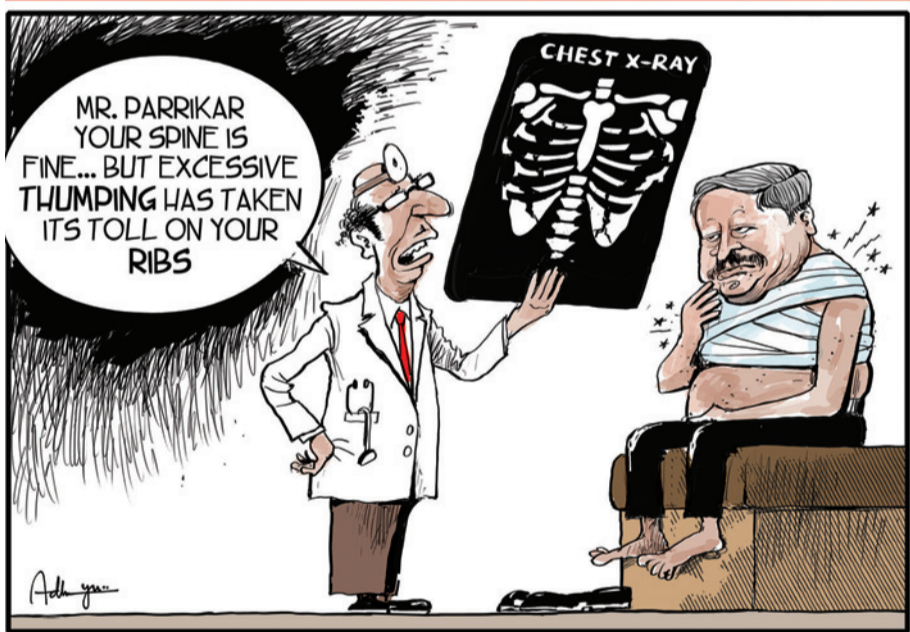
EDI hostel building on Monday and fired upon a staffer, following which security forces surrounded the building, firing regularly but trying to wear them down.

"The EDI building is used to provide vocational train-

ing to young Kashmiris, and its being targeted by terrorists laid bare their aim of choking employment avenues in the Valley so that the youth are disaffected enough to pick up stones and guns," said an analyst.

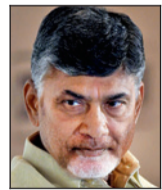
## LINE OF NO CONTROL

SANDEEP ADHWARYU



## 'Junk ₹500, ₹1k notes to curb black money'

Amaravati: Andhra Pradesh chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu reiterated on



Wednesday his demand for immediately abolishing currency notes of Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 denominations to check black money in the country.

Naidu said he would be writing a letter to PM Narendra Modi in this regard. He said abolishing the big currency notes was necessary to check those who are buying votes and misusing the people's mandate.

Terminating black money as the root cause of all the evils, Naidu said this could be curbed by abolishing cash and currency transactions and making all transactions through banks compulsory.

"In course of time we have to go for total bank transactions. We have to regulate and create culture. Then we can control all evils and then only everybody will earn money through genuine way," he said. IANS

# Soon, salons in K'taka hospitals

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Bengaluru: Patients and their attendants in government hospitals in Karnataka would now be discouraged to sport bushy beards and unkempt tresses. The Siddaramaiah government has issued a directive making it mandatory for all government hospitals to have hair salons in their premises.

"Create space in the hospital premises for barbers to set up shops and submit a compliance report," reads the directive issued at the behest of state health minister KR Ramesh Kumar.

The directive, issued to all district health officers, is aimed at ensuring high personal hygiene among patients and their attendants.

Hospital authorities, however, have also been instructed to ensure there is no violation of religious sentiments on the pretext of personal hygiene.

"This is not a hard-and-fast rule, it is only aimed at

ensuring a better hospital environment. The sentiments of different religious communities will be respected and no one will be forced to change his or her looks against their will," a senior health department official said.

Explaining the rationale behind the directive, Kumar told TOI: "These hospitals also get accident victims and hernia patients. Body hair has to be removed to conduct surgeries or to administer treatment, and we cannot go running in search of a barber in such circumstances. Hence, the directive is to set up barber shops."

## Kerala bandh today after BJP worker killed

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Kannur: In continuing political violence in Kerala, a BJP worker was murdered in Pinarayi, hometown of CMPinarayi Vijayan, in Kannur district on Wednesday. The incident occurred within 48 hours of the murder of CPM worker K Mohanan in the same district.

BJP has called for a state-wide strike on Thursday to protest the killing of the 27-year-old worker, Ramith, whose father Chodon Uthaman, a BMS worker, was also murdered in 2002.

BJP sources said Ramith tried to escape the killers who were hiding in the bushes nearby. But they chased him and hacked him. He was immediately rushed to a hospital with the help of some excise officials but could not be saved.

BJP's central leadership demanded a CBI probe into the killing, saying it had no faith in the state police and the government.

CPM general secretary Sitaram Yechury denied the charges, saying the RSS had started the violence.

# Govt plans to get rid of dumpyards in 20 big cities in just three years

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New Delhi: The government has set itself an ambitious target: it wants to get rid of the monumental dumpyards in at least 20 large cities, including 10 major state capitals like Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Lucknow and Ahmedabad, in the next three years under the Swachh Bharat Mission.

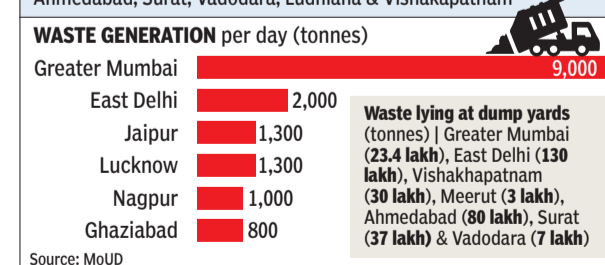
On Monday, municipal commissioners of these cities agreed to formulate time-bound action plans by factoring in the solid waste already dumped at landfill sites and the daily generation of such waste.

They took part in a review meeting on managing solid waste chaired by Union urban development secretary Rajiv Gauba. The ministry will have a template ready within a week for preparation of detailed project reports.

Sources said that while the focus will be on seeking to reclaim the landfill sites by reducing the volume of dumped waste before capping them with soil, the thrust of

## WASTE MANAGEMENT

**CITIES TO BE COVERED** | Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Bhopal, Jaipur, Lucknow and Patna (all state capitals), Pune, Nashik, Indore, Kanpur, Meerut, Agra, Ghaziabad, Ahmedabad, Surat, Vadodra, Ludhiana & Vishakhapatnam



**Waste lying at dump yards (tonnes)** | Greater Mumbai (23.4 lakh), East Delhi (130 lakh), Vishakhapatnam (30 lakh), Meerut (3 lakh), Ahmedabad (80 lakh), Surat (37 lakh) & Vadodra (7 lakh)

the action plan will also be on recycling to minimise waste generated every day.

Priority will be given to converting municipal solid waste into wealth by setting up waste-to-energy and waste-to-compost plants, besides setting up mechanised bio-mining plants for segregation of waste for recycling. Such projects can get financial support under the National Clean Environment Fund and the Multilateral Green Climate Fund, which

are managed by the environment and forests ministry.

"A representative said urban waste accounts for the release of 3% of climate change-causing greenhouse gases," said an official who participated in the meeting. He added that while officials from Mumbai and Pune shared how they had capped the dumps by covering the waste with soil, representatives from Kumbakonam, a small municipality in Tamil Nadu, gave details of their bio-mining initiative to

reclaim landfill sites. In this scheme, already deposited waste is loosened and bulky items are removed. Then, the old waste is sprayed with composting bio-culture and then formed into conventional aerobic windrows on the site. The waste is then sterilised, stabilised, and readied for segregation. It is then sent for recycling, re-use or composting. The bio-mining process can reduce old waste by almost 40%.

"The secretary said that while capping of huge dumps to convert them into green spaces can be proceeded with where action has been already initiated, as in the case of Greater Mumbai and Pune, the focus should be on reducing the volume and size of such dumps by segregating the dumped waste for reuse through bio-mining and bio-remediation. All cities have agreed on this course of action," an official said.

Bio-remediation uses biological agents, mainly micro-organisms such as yeast, fungi or bacteria, to clean contaminated soil and water.